DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 361 339 SP 034 769

AUTHOR Nel, Johanna; Sherritt, Caroline
TITLE Teacher Preparation: A Key to the Empowerment and Leadership Development of Asian/Pacific American Students.
PUB DATE May 93
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for Asian and Pacific American Education (15th, New York, NY, May 5-9, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Asian Americans; *Comparative Education; Course Content; Course Objectives; *Cross Cultural Studies; *Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Traits; Education Courses; Elementary Secondary Education; *Foundations of Education; Higher Education; *Japanese Americans; Pacific Americans; Preservice Teacher Education; Student Needs; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Preservice Teachers; Student Empowerment

ABSTRACT

Increasing numbers of Asian/Pacific youth in the schools present a challenge for teacher education. Teachers need the knowledge and skills to empower Japanese students in their classes and the commitment and sensitivity to develop the leadership potential inherent in the strong work ethic and cooperative skills many of these students possess. This paper presents a model of a traditional foundations of education course that was adapted to provide a cross cultural and international dimension to students' understanding by comparing U.S. educational systems and beliefs with those of Japan. Through an examination of the processes of teaching and learning which nurture character, identity, and cooperation, future teachers gained an understanding and respect for Japanese culture that they did not have prior to taking this course. Daily journal writings reflected their growth in cultural sensitivity and understanding and a desire to be instrumental in developing Asian American students to their highest potential. Information on specific course objectives, course content, texts used in the course, and audiovisual materials is included. (LL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 361 339

Teacher Preparation: A Key to the Empowerment and Leadership Development of Asian/Pacific American Students

by

Johanna Nel (Ph.D.)
University of Wyoming

Caroline Sherritt (Ph.D.)
University of Wyoming

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Nel

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Paper presented at the National Association for Asian and Pacific American Education, 15th Annual National Conference, May 5-9, 1993 , New York City, New York.

SP034769

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Teacher Preparation: A Key to the Empowerment and Leadership Development of Asian/Pacific American Students

by

Johanna Nel (Ph.D.)
University of Wyoming

Caroline Sherritt (Ph.D.)
University of Wyoming

The 1990 census showed that the Asian and Pacific Islander population in the United States was the fastest growing minority group during the 1980's (Parkay and Stanford, 1992). The increasing numbers of Asian/Pacific youth in our schools, many with superior work ethic and social values, present a challenge for teacher education. Colleges of education are beginning to realize that there is a dire lack of knowledge about the culture and learning styles of Asian/Pacific American students and that the special needs of the so-called "Model Minority" are often not recognized in the light of the more obvious problems presented by low-achievement/high dropout rates of Hispanic, Black and Native American students. Teachers need knowledge and skills to empower the Asian/Pacific students in their classes and they need the commitment and sensitivity to develop the potential of leadership inherent in the strong work ethics and superior cooperative skills that many of these students have.

Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to investigate a way in which teacher training can achieve these objectives by adapting basic courses. A model of a traditional foundations course which was changed into a successful comparative education course will be presented. Focusing on a critical examination of educational thought and practice, this course was successful in increasing student sensitivity and knowledge about Asia and the Pacific and in enhancing skills and commitment to effectively teach and empower Japanese American students. The fact that Foundations of Education is a required course in the training programs of the majority of colleges of education makes this model useful on a wide scale.

Historical Background

Of all the microcultures in the United States, the Asians may be the least understood by American macroculture. Asian cultures appear to have been assimilated and accommodated without the same kind of uprooting and racial strife experienced by other minorities. They did. however, experience a great deal of discrimination during early years when Asians were denied the right of citizenship, to own land (Sue, 1981), and to live and work outside their cultural community. This resulted in Asian-Americans forming their own cultural enclaves. Thus isolated, many continued to speak their native language and maintained old-world traditions (Banks, 1987). During the nineteenth century fear of Asians led to harsh limitations on immigration and often inhuman treatment, especially of the Chinese in the Midwest. Having outlived their usefulness when the trans-continental railroad was completed this group of Asians became "unwelcome" visitors. World War II brought another example of bias, fear and discrimination against Asians when thousands of Japanese-Americans were interned in America (Kierstad & Wagner, 1993).

Salient Japanese Values

The most salient values in Japanese society are harmony *(wa)*, hard work, and a "shame" culture. In and of themselves these values are not unique to Japan. Practiced and believed in combination, however, has led to a distinct national character which, according to Soroka (1992), is largely responsible for the nation's economic success. The Japanese people believe emphatically in the conquering of self as a pre-condition to success and that this can only be accomplished by pushing oneself to the limits of physical and mental endurance. Children are taught from a very young age that they have to do their duty *(giri)* and meet their obligations *(on)*.

An investigation of common characteristics of people in leadership positions indicates the frequent presence of *wa, giri* , and *on*.. The ability to maintain harmony and minimize conflict in social relationships is also an invaluable asset to all leaders. American teachers often have a hard time trying to impress on youngsters the value of hard work, diligence, self-discipline and the need for individuals to meet obligations. In this respect Japanese-American students who have been exposed to these values at home, have a distinct advantage over many of their peers belonging to the macroculture.

To effectively use the pool of potential leaders presented by many Asian students teachers need to be aware of the value systems of this group of students. While the great diversity among Asian Americans prevents us from generalizing many Asian students with strong work ethics and leadership abilities may be falling through the cracks, so to speak,

when teachers are unaware of their potential leadership abilities or when they fail to recognize the link between *giri, on* and the development of future leaders.

Academically Talented Asian Students

Statistics indicate that Asian students outscore all racial groups with regards to composite scores on the ACT standardized test (Caucasian, 19.4, Asian/Pacific, 20.0) and math scores on the SAT standardized test (White 491, Asian, 525). Compared to the White student population Asian-Pacific language scores are 25.2 to 27.8 and Math scores 16.6 to 15.5. On the SAT verbal test Asian students, with an average of 409 outscore all other ethnic groups with the exception of White students who have an average of 446 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1989). With regard to the development of leadership and the empowerment of students it is also significant to note that 47 percent of Asian High School Sophomores are in college bound programs. The figure for White students is 37 percent, for Blacks, 29 percent, and for Hispanics and Native Americans, 23 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 1980). These statistics appear to make a convincing case for teachers of the worthwhileness to invest their time and energy in developing the leadership potential of their Asian students.

Cultural Knowledge: A Necessity for Teachers

If we accept the assumption that the major goal of teachers is to foster the intellectual, personal and social development of <u>all</u> students to their highest potential teacher colleges have an obligation to inform preservice teachers about the cultural characteristics of their students. Planning teaching and learning experiences to develop the leadership potential of Asian-American learners requires an understanding of their developmental characteristics, achievement levels, language problems, cultural characteristics and learning styles (Baruth & Manning, 1992). Without knowledge and understanding valuable leadership potential may go by undetected and undeveloped.

Unfortunately, as was stated earlier, Asians appear to be the least understood by American macroculture (Kierstad & Wagner, 1993). An informal questionnaire administered to preservice teachers confirmed this. On the average future teachers appear to know far less about Japanese and Chinese Americans than they do about Black, Hispanic or Native Americans. Even the myth about the "model minority" was not generally known. The most frequent answer to "What do you know about the Japanese and Chinese"? were that the Japanese are in unfair trade competition with Americans and the Chinese-Americans have good restaurants. Very few substantial answers were forthcoming with regard to Japanese Americans. The serious need for future teachers to

learn about Japan became evident when questions were raised as to the reason for studying Japanese culture in an American teacher education class and students politely protested its possible incorporation into the curriculum. Comments such as these were clearly prompted by prejudice and a lack of knowledge.

Infusing Cross-Cultural Concepts

The development of a multicultural foundations of education course was a direct result of the college's commitment to infuse cross-cultural learning into all it's preservice teacher education programs. A traditional three credit hour foundations of education course which supplied a critical examination of educational thought and practice in the United States for undergraduates was adapted to provide a cross cultural and international dimension to students' understanding by comparing United States educational systems and beliefs with those of Japan.

Specific Course Objectives:

Course objectives included: To help each student to:

1. Develop an understanding that all educational issues and problems in the United States and in other countries, for example Japan, have historical, philosophical and social dimensions.
2. Identify major events in the historical development of American and Japanese schools, including a comprehension of the relationship between historical and current educational practices.
3. Know salient features of major Western and Japanese philosophies of education and understand the relationship between philosophy and the practice of education.
4. Develop the ability to critically examine issues in the United States and Japanese education, and by extension international educational issues.
5. Develop an understanding of the sociocultural forces which affect classroom experiences in both countries.
6. Develop a better understanding of individuals who differ from him/ her through opportunities to learn more about Japan.
7. Increase knowledge, skills and commitment to teach effectively about Japan and other cultures.
8. Realize the need for international education and cooperation and the dangers of misunderstanding and discord.

Course Content:

Unit I--Historical Perspectives:

a. Antecedents of American and Japanese education
b. Development of education in the United States and Japan.

Unit II--Philosophical Foundations of Education:

a. The relevance of philosophy.
b. Schools of philosophy and educational theories in the United States and Japan.
c. Philosophical implication for curriculum design, ethical and moral educational decision making, classroom management, planning, and presentation in both countries.

Unit III--Social Foundations of Education:

a. Religion and American and Japanese schools.
b. Organization and financing of American and Japanese schools.
c. Specialized concerns of education in the United States and Japan.
d. Instructional systems technology.
e. Teaching as a profession.

Texts used in the course:

Parkay, F. W., & Stanford, B. H. (1992). *Becoming a Teacher*. Allyn and Bacon Publishing Co.

White, M. (1987).*The Japanese Educational Challenge: A Commitment to Children*.. Collier MacMillan Publishers.

Finkelstein, B.,Imamura,and A. E., Tobin, J. T. (1991). *Transcending Stereotypes: Discovering Japanese Culture and Education*.. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press Inc.

Christopher, R. C. (1983). *The Japanese Mind*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.

Audio Visual Materials:

Video: Head of the Class
Film: Education --17th & 18th century
Film: Education in the 19th century
Film: Education in the 20th century
Video: Bluffing It

Video: Teach Your Children
Film: Greeks in Search of Meaning
Film: Summerhill
Video: Dropouts, Teen Pregnancies, Suicide
Video: Paying the Freight
Slides on Japan
Video: The Education Race
Personal Japan Video
Video: Class Divided
Cypher in the Snow
Video: Wanted a Million Teachers
Video Letter from Japan - My Day
Video Letter from Japan - The College Years
Video Letter from Japan - Suburban Tokyo High School Students
Video: Cram School
Video: Faces of Japan - The New Generation

In this course the educational philosophies of both countries were explored and students were encouraged to view the world through Japanese eyes. Specific efforts were made to stifle tendencies to oversimplify to make the culture more understandable or to overgeneralize to minimize feelings of ambiguity. As can be expected it was often a struggle for students not to become judgmental when cultural perspectives caused discomfort. Students learned about the moral assumptions of everyday life at home and school, and the forms of classroom culture which included requirements of practice until perfect, and the value placed on technique, craft and precision (Finkelstein, 1991). Insight was gained into the Japanese's unusual sensitivity to the way students learn and the manner in which they relate to each other; the rough-and-tumble quality of Japanese preschools, the gentleness with which teachers encourage students to work together and learn from each other; their unwillingness to lead discussions, their high degree of tolerance for invisible and/or unevaluated outcomes, and their high respect for the learning power of individual students (Finkelstein, 1991).

In looking at the historical foundations of education in the United States and in Japan students were relieved to discover that our education system was not the only one beset with historic dilemmas which defy quick fixes. Similar to the United States the Japanese people were struggling with moral, political and economic issues (Finkelstein,

1991) and trying to resolve disagreements among reformers about the best way to reconcile merit and equality, public and private education. The many commonalities between the two cultures became an eye opener to students and helped to create a sense of empathy with Japanese-Americans that did not exist at the beginning of the semester. Female students were especially intrigued with childrearing practices, the educational role of mothers and the way Japanese women define liberation within their domestic roles.

Through an examination of the processes of teaching and learning which nurture character, identity and cooperation future teachers gained an understanding and respect for Japanese culture that they did not have prior to taking this course. Daily journal writings reflected the growth in cultural sensitivity and understanding and an honest desire to be instrumental in developing Asian American students to their highest potential became apparent as the course progressed. A highlight of the course appeared to be the opportunity students had to visit and share their thoughts and ideas with Hirosesan, a visiting professor from Tokyo. At this time several students expressed an interest in becoming participants in the JET (Japan Exchange Teaching) program.

In the final analysis, it appears that a traditional foundations course can be successfully adapted to become a powerful instrument in educating preservice teachers to become empathetic, culturally sensitive teachers capable of empowering the growing number of Asian American students.

Selected References

Banks, J. A. (1987). *Teaching strategies for ethnic studies*. Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.

Baruth, L. G., and Manning, M. L. (1992). *Multicultural education of children and adolescents*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.

Christopher, R. C. (1983). *The Japanese mind*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.

Finkelstein, B., Imamura, and A. E., Tobin, J. T. (1991).*Transcending stereotypes: Discovering Japanese culture and education*.. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press Inc.

Kierstad, F. D., & Wagner, P.A. (1993). *The ethical, legal, and multicultural foundations of teaching*. Madison, Wisconsin: Brown and Benchmark.

National Center for Education Statistics (1980). *High school and beyond study*. Washington. D. C.: National Center for Education Statistics.

National Center for Education Statistics (1989). *Digest of education statistics*. Washington. D. C.: National Center for Education Statistics.

Parkay, F. W. and Stanford, B. H. (1992). *Becoming a teacher*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon..

Soroka, B. (1992). *Sociology: Cultural diversity in a changing world.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Sue, D. W. (1981). *Counseling the culturally different*. New York: John Wiley.

White, M. (1987).*The Japanese educational challenge: A commitment to children*.. : Collier MacMillan Publishers.